

July 15, 2004

Hon. Steny H. Hoyer
House Democratic Whip
H-306, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Hoyer:

I am greatly encouraged by the development of the Full-Service Community Schools Act. Community schools are not a luxury, but rather imperative to effect significant change in the lives of millions of families across socio-economic levels. Our nation desperately needs multiple and coordinated supports to allow all parents to have stable families that thrive and children that become strong, healthy and productive adults. Meaningful improvements in school-age children's achievement cannot be attained in the absence of a holistic approach that takes the total family ecology into account. As one family support practitioner aptly observed:

People need to understand Maslow's hierarchy.
Human beings must satisfy basic needs before
higher needs, such as educational success, can
become a priority.

Family Support Practice

For over 23 years, Family Support America has advanced the field of family support to enhance the nation's capacity to provide parents with the supports they need to raise children that thrive. Family support is:

- A set of beliefs and approach to strengthening families and communities.
- A type of grassroots, community-based program designed to *prevent* family problems.
- A shift in human services delivery.
- A movement for social change.

Over the past nine years, Family Support America, with generous support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, has provided family support technical assistance to state collaboratives across the country. That work has further increased our knowledge and understanding of the importance of full service schools as a way of increasing academic achievement for children and more fully supporting families in their roles as their child's first and most important teacher. It is well recognized that healthy and happy children need strong families and these families do best when they live in supportive communities. Community and full service school are effective vehicles for engaging parents and communities.